CHAPTER 20 Celebrates ITS 25th ANNIVERSARY

Anniversary Celebration

MIA Identified

Together Then... Together Now
Marching Unit
Ray Melens, Commander

The month of September ended up being a very busy month for members of the Marching Unit and Honor Guard. It was a very emotional month with some ups and downs. Come with me now as we travel back in time to that month of September.

First on Thursday, September 7th, I traveled to Herkimer, NY with Region 2 Director, Fred Elliott to attend Chapter 827’s monthly meeting. I was asked to attend their meeting because they want to start an Honor Guard and they were looking for some advice and tips on getting one started. Fred and I were quite impressed with their sincerity in this endeavor. They asked some very good questions and I think they will do just fine, once they’re up and running. Their major concern was funerals. They, like us, want to make sure that all Vietnam Veterans get the proper Military Honors funeral that we are all entitled to now by law.

Members of the Marching Unit were in attendance at the 10th Anniversary of the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Highland Park on Saturday, September 9th. Marching Unit members were there all day to conduct tours of the Memorial. Then at 4:00 P.M. that afternoon was the closing ceremony. The closing ceremony consisted of the usual politicians making their speeches and the take-off of the Huey chopper that was on display all day. Here is the pilot of that chopper, See if you recognize him. He’s quite a good looking guy, but I don’t know if I would trust his flying capabilities. After the chopper flew off, the Marching Unit marched to the parking lot to prepare for the official conclusion to the day’s events. They proceeded to march to the overlook and retire the A-flag that was flying that day. The flag was brought down, folded properly and presented to Chapter President Ken Moore, to be kept by the Chapter as the official flag that was flown on the 10th anniversary of the Memorial.

A new flag was raised, and a 21-gun salute and the playing of Taps concluded the closing ceremony.

Later that evening, the candle-light vigil was held for our POW/MIA’s. This year’s vigil, I must say, was well attended. It was a very touching and somber evening.

Later that week was the annual Honor Guard trip to Washington, D.C. to conduct ceremonies at the WALL and at Arlington National Cemetery. Our caravan left on Thursday morning and arrived safe and sound in D.C. later that afternoon. I am also glad to say that the trip down was uneventful for all, unlike the return trip. I must say that as usual I was very proud and honored to be able to lead this group of people in these ceremonies. This year we had a total of 32 people attending. We had seven people join us from PA Chapter 364 and several people from Chapter 20 that came on their own with us. Our friends from the National office were in attendance as well again this year.

The closing ceremony consisted of the usual politicians making their speeches and the take-off of the Huey chopper that was on display all day. Here is the pilot of that chopper. See if you recognize him. He’s quite a good looking guy, but I don’t know if I would trust his flying capabilities.

Watch for the President’s Message in our December issue.

The VVA Veteran and Mokie Porter from the National office.

Again this year our ceremonies drew a large crowd at the WALL. It’s just so strange marching on the walk to the apex of the Memorial and all you can hear are the heels hitting the walkway at the same time, and how the people just step back so we can approach without saying a word to anyone. Then when our POW/MIA Chairperson starts to speak at the apex, how the people gather around to hear what she has to say. You would be surprised at the number of people that are not aware what that day is and why we are there. After they listen to Gail, they sure know then. You will also notice some people in the crowd get-
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On September 29 and 30, Chapter 20 celebrated its 25th Anniversary with two special events. On Friday evening, Jack Devine, national VVA Vice President, spoke at the Armory on VetsConnect. And on Saturday, the chapter had its Silver Celebration dinner at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. Pat McGonigle, morning anchor at News 10 NBC, was master of ceremonies, and the keynote speaker was Adrian Cronauer, the person on whom the film Good Morning, Vietnam! was based. The celebration continued with music by the Coupe de Villes. Awards presented:

Roger Robach Award: Fred Elliott
Don and Rori Murrell Humanitarian Award: Gail Bologna-Melens and Ray Melens
Veterans Service Award: Peter Galle
Outstanding Service Award: Bruce McDaniel
Cont’d from page 3

Let's keep working to get the other nine home where they belong, with their families.

On Saturday November 11th we will conduct our annual Veterans Day ceremony at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Highland Park. The ceremony will be held at 6:00 P.M. I need members of the Marching Unit to volunteer for this ceremony, if you haven’t already done so. Immediately following the ceremony we will have a tailgate party. Last year Ralph Pascale brought chili and all the fixings. We really had a good time and got to enjoy each other’s company and friendship after remembering our 280 fallen brothers that are enshrined there. Hope to see you all there that night.

The Honor Guard will meet again at Ira upstairs one half hour before the membership meeting. As always this meeting is open to anyone wishing to join or is just considering joining. We are always looking for new members to join us. If you are interested in joining either the Marching Unit, Honor Guard or both, just give me a call.

Until next month.................

AT EASE!!!!!!!

POW-MIA

Gail Bologna-Melens, Coordinator

Our local number of POW-MIA’s has been lowered by one. I am so happy to say that PFC James Edward Widener of Chili has been identified through DNA. Jim will be buried in Arlington National Cemetery on November 3, 2006, at 1:00 PM. VVA’s Honor Guard and myself will be among the many in attendance to welcome Jim home to American soil.

Widener telling me that his brother Jim was identified. I was so thrilled and at the same time so sad. I didn’t know whether to say I was so happy or so sad. Was it good news or bad news? I was glad that the waiting and unanswered question was finally over. But, on the other hand it was over. Jim was officially dead. No more hoping that maybe he might be alive with the remote chance of coming home.

Jim grew up in Chili. He had three brothers and a sister. Just out of high school he joined the Marines. He had his life planned out and he wanted to get his military obligation finished. Then he would go on to college in Buffalo without having to worry about the draft. He was sending his money home so that he could buy a sports car when his tour of duty was completed. All of these plans ended when Jim’s helicopter went down over South Vietnam on June 11, 1967.

I got a little insight into the hardship of getting remains back. Although the Widener knew where Jim’s helicopter went down (in a hilly area) they were always told it was on flat ground. After four trips to Vietnam and a lot of money exchanged for tiny fragments of information, Jim was returned. Also returned was James Edwin Moshier, his friend. The Vietnamese were so fickle – one trip it was okay to be there, then it was not good. Yes they knew where his remains were but no you cannot go there. You did not say you wanted his dog tags so you cannot have them. It just went back and forth like that, always with the hand out for money.

It has been almost a full year since Jim’s remains were returned to Hawaii for positive DNA identification. But, at long last the Widener family has an answer and Jim is finally home.

Please REMEMBER all the POW-MIA’s and their families in your thoughts and prayers.

Agent Orange/Health Affairs

Sue Oleksyn, Coordinator

As the holidays approach, we all reflect on the many things that we are thankful for in our lives, and also we celebrate the holidays with those whom we hold dear. Sometimes we move so very fast through life that we forget to slow down and see what really counts or matters. On the evening of the 25th anniversary celebration, I took time to look around the room filled with heroes—though you all would never refer to yourselves as that. Somehow, after a year of dancing with cancer, chemo and all that goes with it, I am much more aware of what matters to me in life.

As I scanned that room, I thought of all the great things that have been accomplished with these people—our VVA family. It is an awesome list. Whether working at the Strong Children’s Telethon, the Special Olympics, raising funds for the Rochester Vietnam Memorial, putting together food baskets at holiday time, putting on Christmas parties for some who may not otherwise have one, helping noble veterans...
receive their just compensation and health care for service connected health issues, holding a mourning loved one in our arms as they face the loss of their noble veteran—no matter what—we all have grown and gained from our unity and strong sense of direction in our common thread—the needs of all veterans and indeed our community as a whole. Look at the amazing job that Bruce McDaniel has done in communicating Chapter 20’s information to the world. Look at the amazing job the Marching Unit and Honor Guard have done representing Chapter 20 and marching and honoring veterans wherever necessary (the best public relations for the Chapter bar none!). Look at the outstanding POW/MIA work that Gail Melens has kept alive and accomplished. We have all accomplished much; we have cried and stood together at the loss of our VVA members and their loved ones; we also have had a great time together with many more to come.

From the Vietnam era to now, we have seen politicians decide our collective destiny with the draft, multiple vaccines, the spraying of Agent Orange (according to Admiral Elmo Zumwalt’s government document on Agent Orange) 6-25 times stronger than Dow Chemical recommended, and the protracted war that cost America so many of its heroes (death, injuries and post-war health issues). Many say that most members of Congress did not send their loved ones to war. What makes one citizen stand up and answer his/her country’s call with noble dignity and another citizen run away or use political connections to avoid the military commitment? What makes a citizen place his/her life in harm’s way to protect another GI? What makes a person be so selfless as to help and embrace others for the greater good instead of promoting their own selfish agenda? What makes a person quietly be a part of the solution in helping on so many fronts while some others use their power as a club to knock down and divide others? Most important, in that room at the 25th anniversary, how can we all be so fortunate as to have so many noble veterans and their families who have given so much back in life after enduring many trials and hardships during the Vietnam War? It is indeed an honor to walk with you all. Take a moment to perhaps say thanks to those who have touched your lives.

Remember that Pat Pudetti and the Veterans’ Service Agency are there to help you in any way they can with your service-connected health issues (753-6040 or serviceofficer@yahoo.com). God bless our troops, their families, our noble veterans and their loved ones, and God bless America. Peace.

25th Anniversary Celebration Committee

“Thank you”

Hi everyone, just wanted to personally give a few thank you’s regarding our 25th Anniversary.

First, I want to thank everyone who attended the event. I felt it was a great success, and for those who attended I hope you had a good time and enjoyed it.

Second, thanks to the Executive Committee and BOD of Chapter 20 for giving us the opportunity to celebrate our 25 years as a Chapter. Thanks for your support and confidence in our committee.

Third, thank you to all of our businesses, corporations and individual donors who helped make this possible by your financial as well as in kind donations. Thanks to Stirling Harris for the slides he put together for the dinner.

Finally, thanks to my committee (Kathy, Nancy, Missy, Meg, Tom, Joe, Nick, Rich, David and Steve). I know we had large event facing us when we first sat down over a year and half ago, but the results were great. Things do happen when people work together for a common goal. I will admit we did run into a few glitches but we worked them out. Thank you to Nancy, Missy, and Rich for all of the behind the scenes work they did besides what I assigned to them.

In closing, I’d like to thank my co-chair Kathy Gleason for all she has done for me and the support she gave during some trying times.

I’m putting together the final tally for the BOD and the Chapter and hope to have them in the next BTL issue. I apologize for anyone I have missed or did not mention. I hope everyone enjoys the rest of this 25th year, and I wish the very best to all in 2007.

Semper Fi, Pat Pudetti

The following people and companies made personal contributions: Mr. Thomas Richards
John and Barbara Wilson
Brooke Lee, Inc.
Penfield Florist

Don’t miss these upcoming meetings!

Please come and support your Chapter!
All meetings held at the Ira Jacobson Post unless otherwise noted.

Membership Meetings
2nd Thursday of the month beginning at 7:30 p.m.

November 9th
No December meeting
Our gratitude for their continuing support contributing to our Chapter through the Program Ad Book goes to the following:
US Congressman Tom Reynolds
NY Assemblyman Joseph Morelle
E-Chx, Inc.

AND, we cannot forget the businesses and individuals who contributed towards our raffle:
Chili’s
Winfield Grill
Richard J. Switzer
Mrs. Billy Memminger who sewed 2 Beautiful afghans

On a special note, I would like to thank all of the members of the 25th Silver Anniversary Fundraiser team, Meg Lewczyk, Dave Hooker, Ken Moore, Nelson Peck, Joe Peck and Steve Mros. Each did an outstanding job in raising monies for this event and I personally thank them all. We raised a little over $12,500 and $1,550 in in-kind contributions. Rich Isaman and Missy Camman, thank you for coming to my aid with the Ad Book because I went out of country. Kathy and Rich Isaman, Nancy and Wayne Miller, Meg Lewczyk, Dave Hooker and Rick and even Jack Devine, thank you for helping to assemble the banquet area and the table centerpieces, and the hospitality suite… It was a wonderful evening, great to see so many old faces and new faces, and we all, I guess me mostly, danced our hearts out to a wonderful band… Great job, Pat.

Nancy Switzer
Chapter 20 thanks the following sponsors of our 25th Anniversary Celebration:

Gold Sponsor: Dakota Restaurant
Dave & Sherri Dansig, Owners

Silver Sponsors: Bausch & Lomb
Excellus Health Plan, Inc.
Rochester Gas & Electric
Don & Sue Charles

Bronze Sponsors: Monroe Litho, Inc.
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THE OLDEST ACTIVE VETERANS ORGANIZATION
SUPPORTS THE VIETNAM VETS

LARRY SCHULMAN, QUARTERMASTER, 271-6967

Vietnam Veterans of America
CHAPTER 20 Car Donation, LLC

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Flagpoles and Accessories • Flags: USA & International Installation & Repair • Custom Banners / Flags
Veteran owned and operated full service flag company. Serving the area for 20 years.
Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 20
Membership Application

Return this application, along with a copy of your DD214, to:
Vietnam Veterans of America, 1199 E. Main Street, Rochester, NY 14609

Name: _____________________________________ Date of Birth: ________________ Sex: M / F
Address: ___________________________________ Home Phone: (_____) ____________________
City: ________________________________________ Work Phone: (_____) _______________________
Zip: ______________ Country: ______________ E-mail Address: ______________________ W / H
Chapter # _______ (if known) ______________ Sponsor: ________________________________

I am not a Vietnam veteran, but I want to help Vietnam veterans and their families.
Please accept my donation: ___________________ ☐ AVVA Membership
______$10 _____$20 ______$50 ______Other ($_______)


Term: _____ 1 year ($20) _____3 years ($50) _____ Life Membership: $250 (ages 49 and under)
$225 (ages 50-55) $200 (ages 56-60) $175 (ages 61-65) $150 (ages 66 and over)

Payment Option: _______ Check _______ Money Order

VVA is a non-profit veterans service organization.
Programs and services are funded by member dues and public donations.
any past or present member of the united states armed services, active or reserve, is eligible. simply fill out and mail the completed form to the veterans walk committee at
po box 92402, rochester, new york 14692.

the veterans walk committee of chapter 20, vva want to thank you for your purchase of a personalized, engraved paver brick. each paver brick (4” x 8”) can have from one to three lines of engraved information. the cost will be $50.00 per brick. make checks or money order payable to: vva chapter 20, veterans walk.

the engraved line(s) can include any of the following information:
• full name
• branch of service, rank
• dates of service (1967-1969, etc.)
• conflict (wwii, korea, vietnam, persian gulf, etc.)

please print the information you would like engraved on the brick below. (maximum of 14 letters/numbers, including spaces per line).

1.   2.   3.   4.   5.   6.   7.   8.

2.   3.   4.   5.   6.   7.   8.   9.

3.   4.   5.   6.   7.   8.   9.   10.

when you return the completed form to the veterans walk committee at
po. box 92402, rochester, new york 14692, please include your payment and “proof of service” for above recipient.

please note: order may take up to 6 months to be fully processed.
Euchre Tournament
Open to Chapter 20 members and guests.
January 27, 2007
7:00 P.M. – 11:00 P.M.
More information to follow…

Calendars and Cards Wanted
Do you have calendars or packages of cards sent to you by charitable organizations which you don’t need? Ralph Pascale can see to it that they are distributed to hospitalized veterans. Give them to him at any membership meeting.

United Way Designation
Chapter 20 is now on United Way as a donor designation eligible agency. Please donate!

Vietnam Veterans of America
THRIFT STORE, CHAPTER 20, LLC

1199 East Main Street, Rochester, NY 14609

Hours: Monday - Friday 8:30am - 5:00pm
Saturday 9:00am - 5:00pm

Car Donations 8:30am - 5:00pm
Truck Pick-up: 9am - 4:30pm
(weather permitting)

~ Delivery Available ~
Truck Pick-up #482-8016
Thrift Store #482-8036

All donations go to the Thrift Store at the address above.

National Veterans Job Expo

Wednesday, November 8, 2006, 10:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M.

Eisenhart Auditorium at the
Rochester Museum & Science Center
657 East Avenue, Rochester, NY.

Meet local and national employers with career opportunities in:

- Health care
- Communications
- Warehouse/distribution
- Utilities
- Manufacturing
- Customer Service
- Retail Operations
- Security/Maintenance
- Food Service
- Hospitality

For all military service veterans • Free admission

Bring your military separation/discharge document (e.g. DD214), if available.

Veterans Outreach Center, Inc., The Resource Center
457 South Avenue, Rochester, New York 14620
Phone: 585-546-4250  Fax: 585-546-5978
www.veteransoutreachcenter.org
Membership Meeting Attendance
October 12, 2006

Ken Moore
Joan & Chuck Macaluso
Larry Schulman
Dan Corona
Tom & Kathy Gleason
Dave Hooker
Ralph Pascale
Ray Melens
Gail Bolona-Melens
Bob & Linda DeMitry
Joe Harkness
Dick & Sue Oleksyn
Tom Puff
Steve Mros
Meg Lewczyk
Pete Galle
Skip Snell
Bill Memenger
Wally & Bonnie Gekoski
Mike Geisler
Fred Elliott
Marie Davias
Gary Tredlinski
Lee Kauffman
Gary Rodas
Tom Meggison
Gordie Williams
Joe Peck
Rusty Kurtz
Dick D’Imperio
Bruce VanApeldoorn
Bruce McDaniel
Cecil Young
Tom Emerson
Dick McDermott
Jack & Bev Prinzing
Phil Nasca
Tim Sturm
Kathy Ryan

Nelson Peck being inducted into the Chapel of Four Chaplains at Cape May, New Jersey.

Jack Devine, VVA National President, met with Chapter 20 members at the Armory in Rochester on September 29. Jack spoke on the new program, VetsConnect.
VC BIKE

One of the most widely used and effective military vehicles is the bicycle. Swift, silent and inconspicuous, bikes were first used in 1875 by the Italian army, but really came into their own in Vietnam.

Needing only a path and using no gas, they were ideal for jungle transport. The Vietnamese victory over the French at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 was made possible by an uninterrupted flow of supplies from the north, maintained by a complex system of about 18,000 porters using bicycles modified to carry 500 pounds of rice and ammunition.

History repeated itself during the U.S. involvement in Vietnam, as thousands of bicycle porters marched along the Ho Chi Minh Trail to support the Vietcong. In the end, not even the modern weaponry could stop the old, reliable bicycle.

The French-made North Vietnamese bicycle displayed in the [U.S. Army Transportation Museum] was captured at a base camp at LZ Phillips, Cambodia. The enemy was routed from the camp by the 4th Infantry Division in 1970.

This bike, along with 11 other bikes, were loaded with dozens of new fatigue uniforms, 250 pair of Ho Chi Minh sandals, 300 ponchos, 100 pistol belts and eight 100 pound bags of rice with 40 cooking pots and 50 aluminum mess kits.

Needing only a path and using no gas, bicycles were ideal for jungle transport. The Vietnamese victory over the French at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 was made possible by an uninterrupted flow of supplies from the north, maintained by a complex system of about 18,000 porters using bicycles modified to carry 500 pounds of rice and ammunition.
Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 20
1199 E. Main Street, Rochester, NY 14609
(585) 482-7396 • Fax (585) 482-5513 • www.vva20.org

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2nd Vice President: Rich Isaman .......... 594-8022 (h)
Secretary: Chuck Macaluso ............. 225-8288 (h)
Treasurer: Larry Schulman............... 271-6967 (h)

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Dave Hooker .......................................544-8815 (h)
Ray Melens .........................................392-2079
Dick Oleksyn .....................................663-5255 (h)
Ralph Pascale .....................................755-2560 (h)
Kathleen Ryan ....................................507-9855
Ron Trovato .......................................544-8470 (h)

COMMITTEE CONTACTS
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AVVA ..............................................638-7805 (h)
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Chaplain .................................638-7805 (h)
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Incarcerated Veterans ............544-8470 (h)
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POW/MIA ................................. 638-7805 (h)
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Speakers Bureau ......................423-0206 (h)
Veterans Affairs/Benefits ...........482-2387
Veterans Walk .................................225-8288
Volunteer Coordinator ........... 638-7805 (h)

WEB SITES/E-MAIL ADDRESSES
Veterans Widows International Network
members@aol.com/vetwindows
NYS Department Health:
www.health.state.ny.us/nyvets
Vietnam Veterans Memorial at Highland Park:
www.vietnammemorial.org
Operation Welcome Home:
www.operationwelcomehome.org
VVA New York State Council:
www.nyvietnamvets.org
Region 2 Director:
www.region2vva.com

VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS AND INFORMATION
Ira Jacobson Legion Post #474 ..........663-7030
VA Clinic - 465 Westfall Road .............463-2600
Veterans Outreach Center ..............546-1081
Vet Center ......................................232-5040
Veterans Administration .............800-827-1000
NYS Council ......................888-678-VETS
Monroe County Veterans Service Agency .......753-6040
e-mail: serviceofficer@yahoo.com

VETERANS BENEFITS HOTLINE
800-827-1000
“Veterans Bill of Rights” ............800-342-3358
VA Medical Center in Batavia ........585-297-1000
VA Hospital in Buffalo .............716-834-9200
VA Medical Center in Canandaigua ....394-2000
VA Medical Center in Bath ........607-644-4000
V.V. of America in Washington ......800-VVA-1316
V.V. Memorial Fund “The Wall” ...........202-393-0090
Nat.’l Lge. of Fam. MIA/POW Updates ...........202-223-6846
Richards House ...................... 506-9060
The Resource Center ............. 546-4250
Stars & Stripes ....................... 546-3524
Persian Gulf Vets, Inc .............. 385-4097
Operation Welcome Home .......... 234-4694

MISCELLANEOUS
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Donation Pick-up, Beth Affeldt ...........482-8016
VVA Vehicle Donations, Beth Affeldt ......224-8484
VVA Chapter 20, Barb DiVico ............482-7396
bdivic@vva20.org

VVA CH. 20 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MTG. ATTENDANCE

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X=Present  E=Excused  A=Absent